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Agenda item 58

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Note verbale dated 23 September 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to transmit a declaration in solidarity with Puerto Rico, adopted on 20 September 2016 by the non-governmental organization members of Cuban civil society (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Cuba kindly requests the Secretary-General to circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 23 September 2016 from the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Spanish]

Declaration in solidarity with Puerto Rico

Cuban civil society organizations, with the support of regional and international organizations based in Cuba, add their voices to the international call for independence for Puerto Rico, to commemorate the 148th anniversary of the Lares uprising and demonstrate the solidarity of our people. Puerto Rico is now one of the oldest colonies in the world but wears the mask of the commonwealth status that the United States has imposed on it and made the world believe is accepted by the Boricua people.

Cuban civil society organizations, with the support of regional and international organizations based in Cuba, welcome the emphasis on the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination in the declaration of the seventeenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, since that right continues to be denied to Puerto Rico, a nation that was formed before its occupation by the United States in 1898 and whose culture, history, language and traditions establish it as a Latin American and Caribbean nation.

The Boricua people continue to be denied the possibility to decide on their future, and the men and women who fight for the independence of their nation are persecuted, incarcerated or even assassinated. One example is Oscar López Rivera who, having spent 35 years in unjust imprisonment in the United States, is the longest-held political prisoner in the world. Another example is Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, who was assassinated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the United States 11 years ago. Those responsible for his death have not been brought to justice.

We welcome and commend the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples for its attention to and handling of the case of Puerto Rico in its work and for its adoption of resolutions that, inter alia, call on the Government of the United States of America to facilitate a process that will allow the Boricua people to exercise their right to self-determination and independence, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

Cuban civil society organizations, supported by regional and international organizations based in Cuba, which are all worthy representatives of the will and spirit of the Cuban people, will continue to fight for Puerto Rican independence and to bring the claim of the Boricua people before multilateral forums such as the Special Committee and the Human Rights Council. The memorable lines of the poem "To Cuba" by the Boricua poet Lola Rodríguez Tió are still fresh in our minds: "Cuba and Puerto Rico are two wings of a single bird, they receive flowers and bullets in the same heart".

Havana, 20 September 2016